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# The EU needs a whistle-blower protection programme



During a seminar held 27 January in the European Parliament, members from the ALDE Group debated with lawyers, journalists and whistle-blowers the conditions and challenges of this European framework. (Photo: [Alde](#))

By **ALDE**

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European Liberals and Democrats, on 27 January, called for a horizontal legislative framework for the protection of whistle-blowers at EU level. During a seminar held in the European Parliament, members from the

ALDE Group debated with lawyers, journalists and whistle-blowers on the conditions and challenges of this European framework.

On the relationship between whistle-blowers and trade secrets, Jean-Marie Cavada, vice-chair of the Legal Affairs committee in the European Parliament, said: "The protection of whistle-blowers is still a controversial issue, as proven by the inter-institutional negotiations on the trade secrets directive, where many exceptions in favour of freedom of expression, media freedom and the protection of whistle-blowers were subject to bottlenecks".

"I have always argued that trade secrets and freedom of press should be compatible, as investigative journalism contributes to the defence and maintenance of a healthy entrepreneurial and institutional environment," Cavada said.

"It is paradoxical to see that the EU has an extensive legislation on fundamental rights but has failed to legislate for the protection of whistle-blowers. They work in favour of the general interest and they are punished for doing it. The EU has a long way to go when it comes to their legal protection".

On the need of a European status for whistle-blowers, Cecilia Wikstrom, ALDE coordinator of the Civil Liberties committee, said: "Unfortunately, despite the vital role whistle-blowers have played during the last five years to disclose information in the fight against corruption, fraud and insecurity, most of them still are unprotected and commonly face harassment, firing, blacklisting, threats and even physical violence."

"This Parliament has asked the Commission to submit a legislative proposal, establishing an effective and comprehensive European whistleblower protection programme. We urgently need horizontal legislative framework for the protection of whistle-blowers at EU level. The benefits of such a framework are crucial in ensuring an effective protection of all fundamental rights," Wikstrom said.